

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ARAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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P R 021645Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4836

INFO AMCONSUL RECIFE

AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BRASILIA 2817

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, BR

SUBJECT: ANOTHER DEPUTY CASSATED

REF: BRASILIA 2715

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT GEISEL APRIL 1 CASSATED FEDERAL DEPUTY LYSANEAS MACIEL (MDB - RIO DE JANEIRO) AND SUSPENDED HIS POLITICAL RIGHTS FOR TEN YEARS. THE ACTION, WIDELY EXPECTED FOLLOWING MACIEL'S TOUGH MARCH 30 SPEECH, CAME AFTER TWO DAYS OF HIGH EMOTION AND RUMORS OF MULTIPLE CASSATIONS AND EVEN OF CLOSING OF CONGRESS. MACIEL'S SPEECH, SPECIFICALLY VIOLATING ESTABLISHED TABOOS, RAISED QUESTION OF EXTENT TO WHICH OTHERS MAY FOLLOW SUIT. WHILE OUTLOOK ON THIS PONT NOT CLEAR NOW, IT SEEMS CERTAIN THAT ANY FURTHER SUCH VIOLATIONS WILL MEET SAME RESPONSE, WITH CONSEQUENT DAMAGE TO ELECTORAL PROCESS, POLITICAL EVOLUTION, AND GOB'S IMAGE BOTH DOMESTICALLY AND ABROAD. END SUMMARY.

1. JUSTICE MINISTER FALCAO ANNOUNCED LATE APRIL 1 THE CASSATION AND SUSPENSION OF POLITICAL RIGHTS (FOR TEN YEARS) OF FEDERAL DEPUTY LYSANEAS MACIEL (MDB-RIO DE JANEIRO). THE ANNOUNCEMENT NOTED THAT IN THE CHAMBER OF

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DEPUTIES MARCH 30, THE "EX-PARLIAMENTARIAN--WHOSE

BEHAVIOR, IN AND OUT OF THE CONGRESS, WAS ALWAYS CHARACTERIZED BY DEFIANCE OF THE REVOLUTION--GAVE A VIOLENT SPEECH, REPEATING GRAVE OFFENSES AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT AND THE CURRENT REGIME." THE ANNOUNCEMENT DID NOT MENTION IA-5 SPECIFICALLY, BUT FOLLOWED THE USUAL FORMULA ("THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC, HAVING HEARD THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL, SIGNED A DECREE...").

2. THE ACTION CAME AFTER TWO DAYS OF TENSION AND RUMOR-RIDDEN CONFUSION SPARKED BY THE SPEECHES OF MACIEL AND OTHERS IN THE WAKE OF THE CASSATIONS OF DEPUTIES MULLER AND ROSSETI (REFTEL). BY THE AFTERNOON OF APRIL 1 THE CONGRESS WAS SEETHING WITH ANXIETY AND RUMOR, WITH ONE VERSION ASSERTING THAT TWELVE CONGRESSMEN WERE TO BE CASSATED, THREE OF THEM SENATORS: PAULO BROASARD AND MARCOS FREIRE OF THE MDB, AND LEADING ARENA LIBERAL TEOTONIO VILELA. SOME SPOKE OF A POSSIBLE CLOSING OF THE CONGRESS, EITHER TEMPORARILY OR INDEFINITELY, TO LET EMOTIONS SUBSIDE. MACIEL CLOSED OUT HIS MANDATE ON THE CHAMBER FLOOR SCREAMING "MURDERER' TORTURER". AT THE ARENA SPOKESMAN, FOLLOWING WHICH HE SPOKE TO DEA MICROPHONES WHEN CHAMBER PRESIDENT CELIO BORJA CLOSED THE SESSION.

3. COMMENT: MACIEL'S SPEECH, WITH ITS REFERENCES TO TORTURE AND DEATH, TO "DARK INTENTIONS," TO "THE CONSENTED ASSAULT ON OUR NATURAL RICHES, THE EXPLOITATION INFLICTED ON OUR WORKERS, THE PROGRESSIVE ENRICHMENT OF THE RICHEST AND THE CORRUPTION WHICH TODAY IS A CONSTANT AT ALMOST ALL LEVELS," AND ITS DIRECT IMPLICATION OF THE MILITARY AS RESPONSIBLE FOR (OR DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN) THESE PROBLEMS, IMMEDIATELY STRUCK ANY NUMBER OF OBSERVERS AS TAILOR-MADE FOR CASSATION. IN ADDITION, OF COURSE, MACIEL HAS LITERALLY FOR YEARS BEEN AT THE TOP OF THE LIST OF RUMORED CASSATIONS. IN THE NARROWEST SENSE, HOWEVER, HIS CASSATION OCCURRED ON THE SAME PRECISE BASIS AS THOSE OF MULLER AND ROSSETI: THAT IS, ESTABLISHED TABOOS WERE VIOLATED, AND THE INCREASINGLY ESTABLISHED PUNISHMENT WAS METED OUT.

4. MORE INTERESTING IS THE EXTENT TO WHICH THAT PUNISHMENT, CONFIDENTIAL

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OR THE THREAT OF IT, APPEARS TO HAVE LOST ITS EFFECT. MACIEL'S SPEECH, WHILE DECLARING THAT EVERYONE HAD BECOME AFRAID TO CRITICIZE THE MILITARY, IN FACT OF COURSE CONSTITUTED A FURTHER DEMONSTRATION OF THE OPPOSITE. SINE THERE IS NO QUESTION ABOUT THE DISPOSITION OF THE REVOLUTION TO USE IA-5'S POWERS TO PUNISH SPECIFIC TRANSGRESSIONS OF THE SORT DESCRIBED, THE QUESTION NOW INVOLVES THE EXTENT TO WHICH OPPOSITION POLITICIANS, INCREASINGLY UNCOWED

BY CASSATION AND INCREASINGLY UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THEIR
"HALF-FREE, HALF-SLAVE" STATE, WILL COMMIT SUCH TRANSGRESSIONS.

5. THE OUTLOOK ON THIS POINT IS NOT CLEAR AT THE
MOMENT. EMOTIONS ARE RUNNING HIGH, BUT WE DOUBT THE MDB
LEADERSHIP IS YET DISPOSED TO ABANDON ITS PLAY-WITHIN-
THE LIMITS STANCE. THE MDB NATIONAL DIRECTORATE MEETING
SCHEDULED FOR APRIL 7 COULD PROVE DECISIVE IN DETERMINING
THE PARTY'S STANCE, BUT INDIVIDUAL MAVERICKS--OF WHICH
THE MDB HAS A GOOD MANY--COULD STILL DECIDE TO GO
THEIR OWN WAY.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BRASILIA 2817

6. AS NOTED, THE GOVERNMENT APPEARS FIRM ENOUGH IN
ITS DETERMINATION TO CASSATE AS MANY POLITICIANS AS CROSS
THE LINE. ONE WELL-PLACE OBSERVER, HOWEVER, SCORED ITS
EVENT INSECURITY IN REACTING SO HARSHLY TO MERE WORDS,
AND INDEED THE ADMINISTRATION DOES HAVE GROUND FOR
CONCERN: ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES CONTINUE, AND THE MDB
IS WIDELY EXPECTED TO SCORE HEAVILY IN THE NOVEMBER
MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS.

7. THUS, THERE ARE THOSE WHO CONTEND THAT THE GOVERNMENT
INTENDS TO CONTINUE THE CASSATIONS UNTIL VIRTUALLY ALL
OF THE OPPOSITION'S INTERESTING AND APPEALING

FIGURES ARE REMOVED FROM POLITICS, THUS IMPROVING ARENA'S ELECTORAL PROSPECTS. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE JORNAL DE BRASILIA APRIL 2 QUOTED A "GOVERNMENT SOURCE" AS DECLARING THAT THERE WILL ONLY BE MORE CASSATIONS IF MORE CASES ARISE, THAT NO "MASS" CASSATIONS ARE PLANNED.

8. WE CONSIDER IT TRUE ENOUGH, AT LEAST AS LONG AS THERE IS NO FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE IN THE RULES OF THE GAME, THAT THE MDB ITSELF CAN DO MUCH TO DETERMINE HOW MANY MORE CASSATIONS THERE WILL BE. IN THIS SAME SENSE WE NOTED EARLY IN THE PROCESS OF POLITICAL RE-OPENING THAT
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MUCH WOULD DEPEND ON THE CAPACITY OF THE PUTATIVE BENEFICIARIES FOR SELF-RESTRAINT. THAT CAPACITY NOW APPEARS TO HAVE WANED, VICTIM PERHAPS PARTLY TO FATIGUE AND PARTLY TO THE TEMPTATIONS PRESENTED AS THAT RE-OPENING HAS EVOLVED. WHETHER OR NOT IT WILL RE-ASSERT ITSELF REMAINS TO BE SEEN; BUT IT IS CERTAIN THAT THE MORE CASSATIONS THERE ARE--AND THERE HAVE NOW BEEN FIVE SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR--THE EMPTIER THE POLITICAL PROCESS HERE BECOMES, THE GREATER THE INCENTIVE TO THE ELECTORATE TO CAST PROTEST VOTES EITHER FOR THE MDB OR BLANK, AND THE GREATER THE GOVERNMENT'S IMAGE PROBLEMS, BOTH DOMESTICALLY AND, OF COURSE, ABROAD.

9. REGARDING THE LAST POINT, AND APPARENTLY RELAXED MACIEL TOLD EMBOFF MARCH 31 THAT HE THOUGHT HE MIGHT BE SPARED ON THE GROUNDS THAT GEISEL, SCHEDULED TO VISIT FRANCE AND THE UK THIS SPRING AND AWARE OF MACIEL'S AFFILIATIONS WITH INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND CONNECTIONS WITH POLITICIANS IN THE US AND EUROPE, WOULD WISH TO AVOID AN INTERNATIONAL OUTCRY THAT COULD MAR HIS TRIP. OTHER OBSERVERS ALSO SUGGESTED THAT SUCH A CONCERN FOR IMAGE ABROAD WOULD AFFECT THIS DOMESTIC POLITICAL DECISION. APPARENTLY, IT DID NOT. END COMMENT
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